# Stronger as One

### Sunshine Coast Chambers of Commerce Merger Proposal

#### Dear Chamber of Commerce member:

Gibsons & District Chamber of Commerce, Sechelt & District Chamber of Commerce, and Pender Harbour & District Chamber of Commerce are working toward becoming a unified Sunshine Coast Chamber of Commerce and have set three separate Special Meetings of the Membership to vote on becoming one Chamber of Commerce, serving the Lower Sunshine Coast from Port Mellon to Egmont. These meetings will be held November 7th and 8th and members are invited to attend in person or online.

Formal invitations to attend the Special Meeting of Membership will be sent via email by October 24th. To be eligible to vote, members must attend the meetings where they hold their membership. Members unable to attend in person may register to join online via Zoom.

Over the summer, the Chairs of each Board of Directors signed a formal Letter of Intent to merge. In August, a volunteer task force was formed to take the necessary steps toward a favourable member vote. It is now ready to call a vote.

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The goal is to have one consolidated Sunshine Coast Chamber of Commerce operational by the end of 2023, registered as a BC non-profit society, governed by the BC Societies Act.

On behalf of the Board of Directors from each Chamber of Commerce, we hope you'll make the time to join us in person, or online to cast your vote toward a consolidated Chamber of Commerce on the Lower Sunshine Coast.

Gaetan Royer, Board Chair, Sechelt & District Chamber of Commerce

Ron Badley, Board Chair, Pender Harbour & District Chamber of Commerce

Doug Marteinson, Board Director, Gibsons & District Chamber of Commerce







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### **FAQs - Frequently Asked Questions**

### How will members benefit from a merger?

There are significant advantages to a consolidated Chamber on the Lower Sunshine Coast, including:

- Power in numbers. As a prominent singular voice for the business community with a combined membership of nearly 500, our business sector will have more influence with Municipal, Provincial, and Federal Governments.
- Membership benefits. Chamber of Commerce memberships will reach
  even further. Businesses will have access to a broader network of
  potential customers and vendors; stronger advocacy; greater business
  resources, and an increased regional audience to support business
  growth. Members from across the Sunshine Coast will also have more
  opportunities to meet each other, share ideas and build lasting
  relationships.
- Operational efficiencies. Increased exposure and cost effectiveness for the Lower Sunshine Coast membership will be achieved through consolidated

online directories, social media channels, marketing and advertising, sponsorship, events, and new partnerships and collaborations. Instead of three independent offices serving territorial regions, one office will serve the Lower Sunshine Coast from Port Mellon to Egmont.

 Shared resources. Combined operations, human resources, leadership volunteers, and administration may reduce overhead expenses, resulting in more membership programming and services revenue.

### Who is involved in the committee leading the merger?

The volunteer Merger Task Force involves the following delegates from each Chamber of Commerce Board: Doug Marteinson, Gibsons; Ron Badley, Pender Harbour; and Gaetan Royer, representing Sechelt.

Colin Stansfield from the Sunshine Coast Regional Economic Development Association (SCREDO) and Morgan Beall from Community Futures Sunshine Coast are ad hoc strategic partners. Pro bono legal guidance is being provided by Charthouse Law.

In July 2023, all three Board Chairs jointly signed a Letter of Intent to Merge, and that began the process of looking at possibilities from all angles and undertaking legal and governance steps necessary to amalgamate.

### How can I make sure I'm fully informed before I vote?

Each Chamber of Commerce will hold information sessions in October to allow for in-person member conversation and feedback. Ongoing updates will be published in member newsletters and at times, via social and traditional media. Task force members and staff welcome and encourage members to reach out anytime with questions, concerns, or ideas.

### How will voting take place?

Each of the three Chambers of Commerce must call an independent Special Meeting of the Membership according to its bylaws. Members are encouraged to attend in person; however, online participation in the meeting is permitted. November 7th and 8th are set for members' meetings and voting. Members will receive their invitation to attend via email. To qualify for a voting, members MUST attend the meeting hosted by the Chamber of Commerce, in which they hold membership.

I have multiple Chamber of Commerce memberships on the Sunshine Coast. Can I vote more than once?

Yes. For each membership you hold, an invitation will be sent to register for the members' meeting and vote. If you hold three memberships, you will receive three invitations. Staggered meeting times will give you the option to attend more than one meeting.

Can I send a delegate from my organization to the Special Members' meeting?

Yes. When you reply to the invitation to attend the meeting and vote, please RSVP with the delegate's name and association to your business or organization.

Why does the resolution put forward in the Notice of Meeting ask for members to vote on the dissolution of all three Chambers of Commerce instead of approving the merger?

The Board of Trade Act has governed all three local chambers since as early as 1946 and does not outline a procedure for organizational mergers. Each organization must first get the federal government's approval to dissolve its trade organizations and associated territory. The Sunshine Coast Chamber of Commerce can then open as a new organization, incorporated under the BC Societies Act.

### What happens after the vote?

The Chamber merger task force recommends an interim Board be created immediately after the vote, with two existing Board members appointed from each Chamber of Commerce and one local economic development organization representative. The provisional Board will meet for three to five months, overseeing all aspects of the integration plan, including amalgamation of bylaws, membership benefits, governance, finance, operations, marketing, and human resources.

Existing Board members will continue to meet until the end of their term, or until the new entity is fully operational and ready to elect its inaugural Board, whichever comes first.

How many members need to show up at their Chamber meetings for the vote to be valid?

Each Chamber of Commerce holds unique bylaws that set a required quorum for Special meetings of the membership. Sechelt requires 5% of members in good

standing to attend; Gibsons requires 15%, and Pender Harbour/Egmont requires ten members. When a quorum is met, the merger vote will proceed with a simple majority ruling the outcome.

### What happens if only two out of three Chambers of Commerce vote in favour of merging?

This membership vote allows all three Chambers of Commerce to dissolve and form one new entity. If two membership bases vote in favour and one against, the Chamber merger task force will address the outcome, and consider the next steps.

What will the new Chamber of Commerce be named and where will its new headquarters be located?

The new Chamber of Commerce will incorporate the Sunshine Coast Chamber of Commerce. No decision has been made about the location of an office.

### Will my membership fees increase when the merged organization opens?

Membership fees renewed or opened with all three Chambers of Commerce through 2024 will see no increase to annual dues. At this time, we are unsure how membership fees will be structured under the new entity.

### Did the Chamber merger task force consider e-voting as a way of reaching more members and ease of voting?

Yes. Setting up an e-voting platform was the task force's original intent. Under legal guidance, the decision was made to implement a hybrid meeting format. Holding an in-person meeting and vote adheres to current bylaws for each existing organization, ensuring the outcome is binding.

### How many staff may be affected by a merger?

There are two part-time Executive Directors (Sechelt and Gibsons) and one part-time contract employee (Pender Harbour). Each is actively involved in merger plans. Board Chairs regularly communicate with employees on future staffing needs and personal interests.

### I still have questions that are unanswered here. How can I get them addressed promptly?

Feel free to send questions or comments directly to your Chamber of Commerce staff team or email the project facilitator Janice Iverson at jiver9082@gmail.com, and she will forward them along.

#### How will you retain local identity and representation?

This question holds top priority and consideration for all three Boards.

There is a commitment to retaining customized (Gibsons, Sechelt, Pender Harbour) networking opportunities, communications channels and events that are easily accessible and close to members' businesses and home communities.

Chamber Task Force members key contacts (Feel free to reach out to staff team as well)

### Gaetan Royer, Board Chair

Sechelt & District Chamber of Commerce E: Gaetan@citystate.ca

#### **Doug Marteinson**

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### **Ron Badley**

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### Janice Iverson

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